

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today joined a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives in support of landmark legislation that will help end discrimination against patients requiring treatment for mental illnesses. The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act was approved by a vote of 268-148.

Mental illnesses are treatable diseases that impact millions of Americans each year. Unfortunately, many group health plans currently do not provide the same coverage for mental illnesses as they do for physical ailments.

“I’m supportive of ending this discriminatory practice,” Wilson said. “Americans deserve better care.”

The bipartisan bill approved today prohibits insurers and group health plans from imposing treatment or financial limitations when they offer mental health benefits that are more restrictive from those applied to medical and surgical services.

The legislation applies only to insurers and group health plans that provide mental health benefits and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation will have a miniscule impact on health insurance premiums.

Over the last eight years, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) has made “parity” coverage for mental health care available to Members of Congress and 8.5 million other federal employees. Research has shown that there has been no significant cost increase attributable to this new coverage. Now, this bill makes available to all Americans the access to affordable mental health services already available to Members of Congress.

The bill is backed by a diverse group of organizations including the American Medical Association, American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy

of Pediatrics, National Hispanic Medical Association, American Counseling Association, Families USA, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, and Mental Health America.

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